

FOOD WORKER EDUCATIONAL CAMPAIGN

“TALKING POINTS” for inspectors to use during poster distribution

- This educational campaign consists of 3 parts; 11” x 17” poster geared toward food workers, a second 11” x 17” poster geared toward managers, and a pamphlet for the general manager.
- The primary focus of this campaign is to educate food workers of the risks of working while ill with vomiting or diarrhea. While in the establishment please take a few moments to share this message with as many workers as possible.
- Show and provide all of the materials to the manager or Qualified Food Operator (QFO) and tell them that the Health Department is participating in a state wide educational campaign. The goal of the campaign is to inform workers and managers of the risks of working while ill with vomiting and diarrhea and to provide information on the steps that can be taken to reduce those risks.
- Since 2002 there have been more than 40 outbreaks in CT that have been associated with workers coming to work while sick and/or that have had workers that tested positive for norovirus. Ill workers have sickened many customers and in several cases the restaurants later closed due to a lack of business.
- The poster geared toward managers has statistics that can be used to discuss the risks of food workers working while ill, the reasons why food workers need to report, what managers should do when a worker reports illness, why managers need to report, and who they should report to.
- The pamphlet for managers has information on the QFO’s and worker’s responsibility to report symptoms and recommendations on how to develop or improve an Employee Health or Sick Leave Policy.
- Time is one of our most valuable assets and often in short supply. Please provide the materials, take a few moments to discuss the objectives of posters and pamphlets and answer or refer any questions the manager may have.

What can the manager do to ensure food workers don’t work while ill?

- ◆ Educate their workers; display the poster, talk to all workers about what the poster says. How to do you help the manager do this? HANG THE POSTER WHERE IT CAN BE SEEN! Try not to leave until the poster is hung in a prominent location.
- ◆ Talk about things the manager can do to inform/educate food workers.
- ◆ Evaluate the policies/procedures that management has in place to ensure sick workers stay home for the appropriate time period.
- ◆ Discuss Employee Health Policies, reporting agreements, or questions at the bottom of the Focused Food Inspection Form. Have available forms or guidance that the manager can use to create or improve an existing Employee Health Policy.

Employee Health Policies

The development and effective implementation of an employee health policy based on the provisions of the 2005 FDA Food Code (Subpart 2-201) can reduce the risk of a foodborne illness associated with contamination of food by ill or infected food service employees. The QFO/person-in-charge and food service employees should be familiar with and able to provide the following information through direct dialogue when interviewed by managers or regulatory officials.

When designing and implementing an employee health or sick leave policy, the following information should be considered and addressed:

1. Does the establishment have an Employee Health or Sick Leave Policy? If yes, are the food workers aware of the policy and is it available in written format and readily available for food workers?
2. Does the establishment require food workers or conditional employees to report illnesses, symptoms, and exposures?
3. Has the food worker signed a Reporting Agreement?
4. What are the reporting requirements for food workers, conditional employees, and the food establishment manager?
5. Are the reporting requirements explained to all employees?
6. What history of exposure is a food worker or conditional employee required to report?
7. If a food worker calls in sick, does the QFO/person-in-charge ask why? Do they ask what symptoms the worker is experiencing?
8. If a food worker reports vomiting, diarrhea or has been diagnosed with a pathogen known to be transmitted via food or workers, what questions are asked of the food employee? (The first question every manager should ask is, "Are you currently having any symptoms?" followed by, "When did you last work?" and "What foods did you prepare while you had symptoms?")
9. What gastrointestinal symptoms would require exclusion of a food employee from the food establishment?
10. Who does the establishment notify when a food worker reports vomiting, diarrhea or a diagnosis with one of the pathogens of concern?
11. If a food worker reports a gastrointestinal symptom, what criteria are used to allow the employee to return to work?